

How Weeds Get Everywhere!

Ever wondered how weeds seem to get everywhere in our gardens? One minute your lawn can be lovely and green and the next it's covered - and I mean covered - in dandelions! Well, it's all to do with the clever way that plants reproduce, and spread their seeds far and wide to keep their species alive.

Making the Seeds

So, how do the plants make so many seeds?

Many plants have female parts (including the ovule and stigma) and male parts (including the stamen). Bees and other insects are attracted to the flowers because of their lovely aromas and colours. While they're at the flower, they help move pollen from the male parts to the female parts in order to fertilise the plant. This process is called pollination. Sometimes the wind can also help with this.

Once the plant is fertilised, the seeds can grow. When this happens in a dandelion, the yellow flower turns into what we call a dandelion 'clock'. If you look closely at a dandelion clock, or 'seed head', it is full of dark coloured seeds with light, feathery, white tops that look like umbrellas.



Fact File

- A weed is only a plant that someone does not want in their garden. They can be very pretty!
- Nettles can be used for making tea and medicines, so they are actually very useful.
- The world's largest weed is giant hogweed. It can grow up to 3.65m in height and have leaves that measure 91cm long.
- Some people think that if you hold a buttercup under your chin and the yellow reflects on your skin, it means that you like butter.

Spreading the Seeds

So, how do the seeds get everywhere?

This is the clever bit...

As we said before, dandelions make lots and lots of seeds. They all have feathery, white tops that look like umbrellas. This makes the seeds perfect for floating and flying through the air. So, all they need is the wind, which carries them off landing near and far – some up to 500m away from the parent plant. Before you know it, there are hundreds of seeds all over your lawn, which are all ready to germinate and make yet more dandelions. Other flowers and plants also have other clever ways of spreading their seeds, including putting them inside tasty fruit so that animals eat them. Eventually, the seeds come out of the other end in their poo and start to germinate!

Questions about How Weeds Get Everywhere!

1. Name one of the female parts of the flower.

2. Name something mentioned in this text, other than bees and other insects, that can move pollen around in the flower to help with pollination.

3. What is another name for a dandelion 'clock'?

4. What is a good thing that nettles can be used for?

5. What makes dandelion seeds good at floating in the air?

6. Name another way mentioned in this text, apart from the wind, that seeds can be dispersed.

7. What is the furthest distance a seed can float away from the parent dandelion?

8. What does 'germinate' mean in the final paragraph?

9. In paragraph two the author has written the contracted word **they're**. Write the full words without the apostrophe.

10. In the first paragraph, what does the word 'reproduce' mean?

Answers about How Weeds Get Everywhere!

Answers

1. Name one of the female parts of the flower.

Ovule or stigma

2. Name something mentioned in this text, other than bees and other insects, that can move pollen around in the flower to help with pollination.

Wind

3. What is another name for a dandelion 'clock'?

A seed head

4. What is a good thing that nettles can be used for?

Making tea or medicine

5. What makes dandelion seeds good at floating in the air?

Accept any reference to them being; light, feathery, like an umbrella.

6. Name another way mentioned in this text, apart from the wind, that seeds can be dispersed.

Through animal poo

7. What is the furthest distance a seed can float away from the parent dandelion?

500m/500metres

8. What does 'germinate' mean in the final paragraph?

Start to grow (from the seed)

9. In paragraph two the author has written the contracted word they're. Write the full words without the apostrophe.

They are

10. In the first paragraph, what does the word 'reproduce' mean?

To make more of / make another one / produce offspring.